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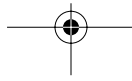
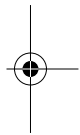
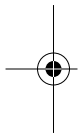
Putting Together the Past

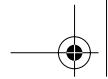


Imagine you're sitting in your living room engrossed in an old-fashioned mystery movie. The tension mounts as characters are introduced and then creatively "dispatched." The clues point to several possible suspects. For about an hour you've been sitting on the edge of your seat, eagerly anticipating each new development. And then the phone rings. You reluctantly pull yourself away from the TV and rush to the receiver, planning to make a quick apology and get back to your flick. But when you recognize your boss's voice on the other end of the line, you know the movie's going to have to wait. You listen dutifully for the next half hour as your manager outlines the strategy for the sales meeting next Tuesday. But as soon as he says, "I'll see you tomorrow," you pop the handset into its cradle, and you're back to the tube like a flash, eager to see what has transpired.

You're just in time to catch the end of the flick. The detective has gathered all the suspects in the old mansion's parlor—but you don't recognize half of their faces. The characters recount crimes and clues that you've never heard of. Disappointed and irritated, you discover that *you're* the one who's clueless. After missing the middle of the movie, the climax doesn't make a lot of sense.

Frustrating? No doubt. But it's not much unlike the experience of trying to piece together Jewish history by reading through the Old and New Testaments in the Protestant Bible. The Old Testament chronicles the epic story of the rise and fall of Israel. This story begins about two thousand years before the time of Christ, when God chose an insignificant Semitic people to become his special instrument in the world. It tells of Israel's rise

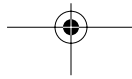
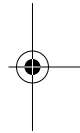
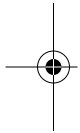


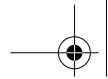


to power and its collapse under the weight of its sin. It closes with the account of how the Persians restored the Jews to their land and incorporated them into the Persian Empire. When the Old Testament historical narrative ends, the Jews are still the insignificant subjects of the mighty Persians. We enter into the period that some Protestants have called “the Four Hundred Silent Years.”

When the New Testament story begins, the world is entirely different. The Persians have vanished from the picture, and the Romans rule over God’s chosen people. The common language is no longer Hebrew, nor (as one might expect) is it now Latin—it’s Greek. The geography also has changed. Jesus comes from the town of Nazareth in the obscure region called Galilee, rarely mentioned in the Old Testament. The Jews have become a cosmopolitan people, present it seems in every province and city of the Roman Empire. New social groups and religious ideas confront us in every Gospel story. We read about Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians. There’s frequent talk of the devil and demons; of eternal suffering in hell and eternal life in heaven—concepts never discussed much in the Old Testament. Astute Bible students might be able to trace the connections from some of these New Testament ideas back to their Old Testament roots, but the task won’t be an easy one. They’re missing several hundred years of Jewish political and religious history. That’s like trying to figure out the plot of a two-hour movie after missing a half hour in the middle—and one of the most eventful half hours at that.

We can certainly understand most of the New Testament without a knowledge of the “intertestamental period”—the time between the Testaments. We can understand the Old Testament too. But we can’t fully appreciate the way these two bodies of literature relate to one another without knowing something of what the Jews experienced between the time of the prophet Malachi and the time of Jesus. As we study the intertestamental literature, we’ll come to see how Jewish and Christian ideas about the devil and his minions arose from early Israelite concepts of evil. We also see that the Jewish sects so prominent in the New Testament didn’t just spring out of the earth. And we can see that Jesus’ ministry, while probably not what most of the Jews would have hoped for from their Messiah, fit well into the mosaic of Jewish expectations during the time in which he lived. A basic knowledge of intertestamental Judaism will give our New Testament study a greater richness. The words, the ideas and the people will take on new depth as we look at them in the light of four hun-





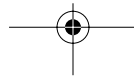
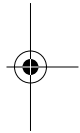
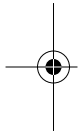
dred years of Jewish struggle, suffering and theological speculation.

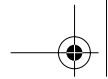
This is an exciting time for the study of intertestamental Judaism. The 1947 discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, ancient Jewish manuscripts dating to the time of Jesus, has opened up a rich vein of new information on Judaism in Jesus' day. Other recently discovered ancient texts as well as new archaeological methods have also given us a great deal of useful data. What has long been hidden can now be revealed and profitably applied to the study of the Scriptures by any interested minister or layperson. The new land is ready to be spied out; its fruit waits to be savored.

Archaeological Sources for Reconstructing Jewish History

How do we go about giving a voice to the so-called silent years? One source historians use for reconstructing the distant past is archaeological findings. Most of us have a general idea about what archaeologists do. We imagine them using pick and spade to uncover ancient artifacts and pry open doorways into the past. The excavations of important biblical sites have thrown important light on the past and forced us to reassess our understandings of some aspects of Israelite and Judean history. But not all the archaeologists' efforts are devoted to digging in ancient settlements, recovering broken pots or spearheads, or reconstructing ruined buildings. Archaeologists also devote many hours to digging in professional journals and museum collections. They work in interdisciplinary teams, sharing knowledge to interpret the significance of their findings. Modern archaeology draws on insights from many fields, such as geology, anthropology and even botany. And if they're especially fortunate, archaeologists may have opportunities to work with philologists in deciphering ancient inscriptions, texts or coins from bygone days. But such informative artifacts are rarely discovered from biblical-era Palestine.

Serious archaeologists aren't like the romantic movie heroes, racing all over the world in search of new discoveries. They specialize in a specific area and might devote many years—or even their entire career—to excavating and interpreting the history of a single site. They may produce profiles of various historical conditions, such as the population density of a region or the habitation and abandonment of a city. They can give us important information about the origins and culture of an ancient people. For instance, the earliest Philistine pots and decorations bear some striking resemblance to ancient Mycenaean pots, giving us a pretty good basis for concluding that the Philistines were of Mycenaean descent. Archaeologists

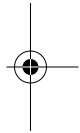
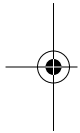


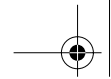


might also be able to tell us who was trading with whom: Egyptian artifacts found in Bronze Age (c. 2000 B.C.) Canaanite cities reveal the extensive trade occurring between the Egyptians and Canaanites during that era. Sometimes excavators dig up telling clues about the rise and fall of ancient settlements. The ruins at Khirbet Qumran, near the caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, have yielded informative artifacts: a devastated wall and a layer of rubble riddled with Roman arrowheads and other imperial paraphernalia speak volumes about the circumstances under which the settlement was destroyed.

These examples demonstrate worthwhile and appropriate uses of archaeology. Some archaeologists might go further still and attempt to create detailed reconstructions of past events on the basis of archaeological data alone. Such hypotheses are notoriously unreliable. The history of archaeology is littered with the relics of ambitious reconstructions that had to be abandoned when new evidence came to light.

Archaeology, for all its marvelous progress, is still an inexact science and probably always will be. It can't give us a complete picture of what people did, why they did it or what they might have said. It generally can't tell us what anyone was thinking at a given time. It usually can't tell us *when* major events happened, except within a few years or decades. And many important events, like a bloodless coup or the ministry of a great individual, might leave no evidence in the archaeological record at all. And as any honest archaeologist will admit, the absence of evidence can hardly be taken as evidence at all. So, for example, there's no *archaeological* evidence that a man named Moses ever existed. But that lack of evidence can't be the basis for concluding that Moses is a myth, as some scholars have argued. Negative evidence, as it's called, can't be the basis for a solid argument. A number of biblical "reconstructionists" (scholars who contend that most of the Old Testament history is myth) are currently wiping egg off their faces because they had insisted that King David was pure fabrication. Since no archaeological evidence of David's empire had been found, these scholars argued that the whole United Monarchy was dreamed up somewhere between the fifth and second centuries B.C. But just recently an inscription was found at Tel Dan in northern Israel that mentions the "house of David" and "king of Israel." The inscription has been dated to the ninth century B.C.—well before the time that the reconstructionists argue the biblical stories about David originated. At the very least the inscription demonstrates the antiquity of the David tradition, and it serves





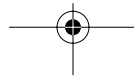
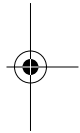
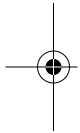
as strong external evidence to the fact that David really did exist. In this case negative evidence has been disproved by the simple turn of a spade.

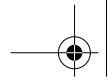
Even when archaeologists have many well-preserved artifacts to study, it can still be difficult to interpret their meaning. Different archaeologists looking at the same material will often come to very different conclusions. The site known as Khirbet Qumran is an excellent example. When Father Roland DeVaux was given the assignment of excavating the site in the 1950s, he believed that the Dead Sea Scrolls were written at that very location. He interpreted his findings in light of descriptions of communal life found in some of the Scrolls. DeVaux identified a large water reservoir as a pool for ritual bathing. One large room was reconstructed as a communal dining hall. Another room identified as a scriptorium, where brothers of the Community leaned over tables to copy their scrolls. Most scholars basically accept DeVaux's interpretation of the site, but not everyone is in agreement. Other archaeologists have argued that Khirbet Qumran was a military fortress, and some have even claimed it was a palatial villa. Qualified investigators can interpret the same data in very different ways. Archaeological reconstructions of the past must always be regarded as tentative, subject to further review and the discovery of new evidence.

Textual Sources for Reconstructing Jewish History

So if archaeological evidence can be imprecise and unreliable, how do we go about reconstructing ancient history? Our primary sources will always be ancient texts. For ancient Israel, our major textual source of historical information is the Old Testament itself. Except for a few scattered inscriptions and references in other ancient texts, the Bible tells us almost everything we know about biblical-era Israel. Once we push out into the intertestamental era there's a good deal more archaeological data, from ruins to coins to funerary inscriptions. But even so, historians still depend primarily on the vast wealth of textual witnesses that derive from this most creative and productive period. It's clear now that these years were anything but "silent"—it was a time of great literary creativity and theological reflection among the Jews. Some might argue that God's voice had been stilled during this time, but his people certainly continued to speak, and they spoke volumes.

Biblical Texts. Most of the intertestamental age falls into the time that scholars call the Second Temple Period (515 B.C. to A.D. 70)—aptly named because it was the time when the Jews' second temple stood in Jerusalem

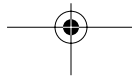
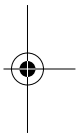
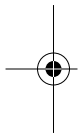


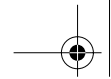


(the first temple—Solomon’s—was destroyed in 586 B.C.). Because it forms such a well-defined unit, we’ll consider the entire Second Temple Period in this study, and not the intertestamental period alone. For the beginning of this period the biblical books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai and Zechariah are our most important sources of information. Archaeologists have discovered other ancient texts that supplement our knowledge of the period, but they can’t begin to match the significance of these biblical documents.

Once we move beyond the century or so covered by these texts, our sources become much more diverse. We no longer have a nicely edited biblical narrative on which we may rely for information. Only one book of the Protestant Bible really deals with the era in any depth: the book of Daniel. According to the stories in the opening chapters of the book, Daniel, a Jewish seer, was taken away to live in Babylon after the siege of Jerusalem in 598 B.C. There, he rose to a high position in the Babylonian court, due to his ability to interpret dreams (a position he held under the Persians, as well). He was also given symbolic visions whereby God revealed future events. Tradition holds that Daniel wrote the entire book that bears his name, and some scholars believe the tradition is reliable. Most scholars, however, believe that the final form of the book comes from the time around 167 B.C., when the Jews in Palestine were being persecuted by a Greek tyrant named Antiochus Epiphanes.¹ And yet, whether we date the composition of Daniel earlier or later, almost all students of the book agree that the later chapters, and especially chapter 11, speak of the time when the Greeks dominated the East, explicitly recounting major political events from the time when Alexander the Great conquered Palestine (332 B.C.) up to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. And so the book of Daniel provides us with some significant historical data about the era when the Greeks ruled the Jews. It also gives us insights into the development of Jewish religious ideas in the Second Temple Period.

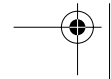
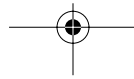
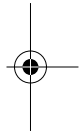
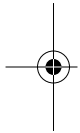
¹Daniel 11 describes how the “king of the Greeks” (Alexander the Great) would conquer the king of Persia, an event that occurred in 331 B.C. The chapter continues to outline the political history of Greek rule in the East up to the time of King Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 B.C., describing how he would declare himself a god and persecute the Jews. From that point on the author seems to have no specific knowledge of events—only a general idea that God would intervene and save his people. And so, say many scholars, the book of Daniel seems to have been published during the time of the Antiochan persecution to provide encouragement for the suffering Jews. The greatest difficulty with this theory is an ethical one: wouldn’t it have been deceptive and dishonest to issue a book in the name of a long-dead figure and present it as a prophecy? We will discuss this issue more when we consider the nature of pseudepigrapha, literary works issued in the names of dead saints.

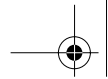




The Apocrypha. In the Protestant Bible the book of Daniel is the only source of historical information for the four hundred silent years. But Catholic and Orthodox Bibles preserve a great deal of literature from this period, in the collection known as the Apocrypha (from the Greek word meaning “hidden”) or deuterocanonical books (“second canon”). These books originated in different places and at different times—from the third century B.C. to almost A.D. 100. They were originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic (the official language of the Babylonian and Persian empires) and Greek. Some were written in Palestine, others in Babylon, and some were written by Jews living in Egypt. They represent a variety of points of view and experiences.

The reason these books don’t appear in the Protestant or Jewish Bibles arises from the circumstances in which Christianity and rabbinic Judaism developed. The first Christians were all Jewish, and their Bible was the Hebrew Bible of the Jews—what we now call the Old Testament. At the time of Jesus there was still some disagreement among the Jews about which books should be considered holy Scripture. Different versions of the Bible circulated among groups like the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Dead Sea Scrolls community and the Jews who lived outside of Palestine. There was broad agreement on the basics: all Jews accepted the books of Moses and probably the Prophets as divine Scripture. Most accepted the Psalms, but there was some disagreement about which Psalms were actually inspired by God. Both the Dead Sea Scrolls and some ancient translations of the Old Testament contain significantly different versions of the Psalms than those that were included in the collection eventually accepted by the Jews (and Christians). There also seems to have been debate around books like Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs, and maybe Esther as well. It was once widely believed that the precise contents of the Old Testament *canon*—the authoritative list of books in the Bible—were fixed in A.D. 90 by a rabbinic council meeting in a town called Jamnia. According to Jewish tradition this council established the “closed canon,” determining that only books produced before the time of Ezra would be regarded as Holy Scripture. Most modern scholars are skeptical about the tradition, but it may have some basis in history. The precise contents of the canon were still apparently in question at the time when the Dead Sea Scrolls and New Testament were written, and through most of the first century A.D., but around the end of the first century A.D. the Jewish historian Josephus states emphatically that





BOOKS OF THE APOCRYPHA

Listed by similarities.

Prayer of Manasseh: Included in some Orthodox Bibles, but not Catholic editions. The apostate king offers a prayer of repentance. Of uncertain date, but probably pre-Christian.

Tobit: The story of how a Jewish man overcomes a demon with divine assistance. Written about 180 B.C.

Judith: The story of a woman who uses her charm and beauty to save her people from an Assyrian oppressor. Written around 150 B.C.

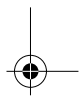
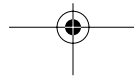
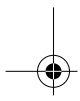
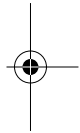
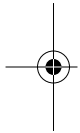
1 Esdras (or 3 Ezra): Found only in the Orthodox Bible. The story of the Old Testament figure Ezra is rewritten with an emphasis on his priestly role. Composed sometime between 150 and 100 B.C.

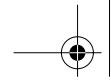
2 Esdras (or 4 Ezra): Only in some Orthodox Bibles. Records visions purportedly given to Ezra about the destruction of the Temple and the coming of the Messiah. Written around A.D. 100 and very reminiscent of the book of Revelation in the New Testament.

Additions to Esther: A collection of prayers, letters and so forth inserted at various points in Greek versions of Esther, which make the text more explicitly "religious." Probably pre-Christian but of uncertain date.

Psalms 151: Orthodox canon only. A synopsis of the story of David. Written in Hebrew in perhaps the third century B.C.

Wisdom of Solomon: A collection of proverbs ascribed to Solomon, heavily influenced by Greek thought. Composed originally in Greek, probably in the first century B.C.





Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach (Ecclesiasticus): A collection of proverbs and anecdotes from a Jewish world traveler. Originally written in Hebrew about 200 B.C. and then translated into Greek by the author's grandson.

Baruch: A composite text including prayers, psalms and proverbs ascribed to Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe. Written in Hebrew in the first or second century B.C.

Epistle of Jeremiah: A letter admonishing the Jews not to worship idols. Written sometime around 300 B.C. but later attached to Baruch as a sixth chapter.

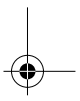
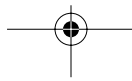
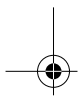
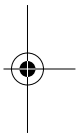
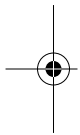
Additions to Daniel: Prayers and songs attributed to the three Hebrew youths in the furnace, and two stories demonstrating Daniel's wisdom and the folly of idolatry. Written between 165 and 100 B.C.

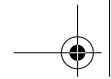
First Maccabees: Account of the Jewish revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes. Styled after biblical chronicles. Written sometime around 100 B.C. in Hebrew or Aramaic.

Second Maccabees: Another account of the Jewish revolt, written in Greek, with more colorful digressions. Also written around 100 B.C.

Third Maccabees: Found in the Orthodox canon only. A prequel to the Maccabees, it tells of the Egyptian Jews' escape from persecution by an angry king. Written in Greek around 100 B.C.

Fourth Maccabees: Included as an appendix in some Orthodox Bibles. An expansion of the martyrdom stories from 2 Maccabees, with heavy influence from Greek thought. Written in the first century A.D.





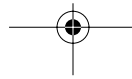
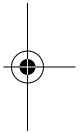
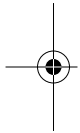
the contents of the Jews' Bible were immutably set at a fixed number.² So at the end of the first century we can be pretty sure that the "mainstream" Jews considered their canon to be closed—no more books could be added to the Hebrew Bible.

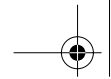
But before the time when the Jews had decided on the contents of their canon, Christianity had already experienced a great deal of growth outside Judea, among people of non-Jewish backgrounds (the Gentiles). These new converts weren't able to read the Bible in the Hebrew language. Since Greek—for reasons that will become clear later—was the common language of the day, the church came to use as its Old Testament a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible known as the Septuagint. This name comes from a Greek word meaning "seventy," based on a legend that the translation was the work of seventy-two (or, in some versions, seventy) scholars.³

Where did this translation come from? It arose from simple necessity. Long before the time of Jesus, many Jews had settled outside of Palestine, dispersed throughout Egypt, Babylon, Asia Minor and even in Greece and Rome. For most of these far-flung people of this so-called Diaspora, Hebrew was no longer a living language. They spoke, wrote and thought in Greek, the lingua franca of the Mediterranean world. And so in order that these children of Abraham could continue to study the Scriptures with understanding, a Greek translation (or translations) was produced and read in the Jewish synagogues throughout the realm. This translation differed significantly from the Hebrew Bible text that the rabbis chose as their canon. Every translation is to some extent an interpretation, and the translators of the Septuagint often interpreted Scripture passages according to their own interests or biases. But there were other differences as well. For one thing the books were arranged differently. The traditional Hebrew text is arranged with Law (books of Moses) first, Prophets (including Judges through 2 Kings, called the "former prophets") second, and the various Writings (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations,

²Josephus *Against Apion* 1.8. There's been much discussion about whether or not Josephus's number can be made to correspond to the actual contents of the canon, but the point here is that he claims the Jews held the contents of the Bible to be fixed, not whether or not there was universal agreement on the canon's contents.

³The legend is first found in the so-called *Letter of Aristeas*. It probably has little basis in fact. The Septuagint is most likely a composite work containing several styles of Greek and representing different translation philosophies. It came into being over many years, as need arose for various Bible books in Greek.





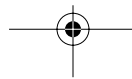
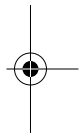
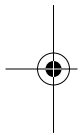
Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1-2 Chronicles) third.⁴ Probably the arrangement reflected the level of “holiness” attached to the books, or perhaps the “Writings” were simply composed later than the other texts. In any event the Septuagint arranged the books differently: Law first, historical books next, then the poetic and “wise sayings” books, and last the prophets (major prophets first, then the minor prophets, in their supposed order of composition).⁵

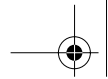
That wasn’t the only difference, however. Somehow the Septuagint came to have several books included in it that the traditional Hebrew text lacked—the books of the Apocrypha. There’s some mystery surrounding how that addition occurred. Philo of Alexandria, a Jewish philosopher of the first century B.C. to the first century A.D., never quotes from these books as Scripture, though he must have been aware of their contents. The earliest evidence of the apocryphal works treated as Scripture comes from ancient Christian codices (plural of codex, the precursors to modern books), which bound these books together with the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament. Based on this evidence some have argued that the Apocrypha was a Christian invention. Perhaps so, but there’s no reason to doubt that some Jews were reading at least parts of the Septuagint as Scripture. At any rate it’s clear that for early Christians who used the Septuagint, the intertestamental period wasn’t a time of silence. It was part of God’s salvation history. Even after most of the Jews had adopted the rabbis’ canon, the Christians continued to use their beloved Septuagint, with its apocryphal additions.

After many years of Roman rule Latin displaced Greek as the language of the people. Now the church felt the need for a new Bible in the common language. In the 4th century A.D. Jerome undertook a translation of the Bible from Greek to Latin, using both a Hebrew text and the Septuagint as the basis of his Old Testament. He decreed the books that existed in the Septuagint, but not in the Hebrew canon, to be “apocryphal,” and he didn’t include them in his edition of the Old Testament. Not long after his time, however, the church restored them to the text in Latin translation. This edition became known as the Vulgate (Latin for “common”) Bible, and it was used in the Catholic Church up through the Middle Ages. The

⁴The historical books of the Old Testament were believed to have been written by prophets, so they were considered part of the prophetic corpus.

⁵How this arrangement came about is uncertain. It may even have been a Christian invention, reflecting the church’s belief that Christ is the fulfillment of prophecy.





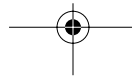
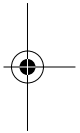
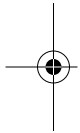
THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON

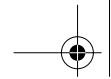
Unlike the Old Testament, the history of the New Testament canon can be traced with relative ease. In the decades after Jesus the Christians began to collect various documents that expressed the essentials of the faith. These included sayings of Jesus that had been passed on orally among his followers and later committed to writing. Eventually they were incorporated into some of the Gospels.

Other authoritative texts included letters from apostles written to various churches. In 2 Peter 3:16 the letters of Paul are grouped together with “the rest of the Scriptures.” To the author of this letter they were Scripture—just like the books of the Septuagint.

By the mid-second century A.D. there was a wide consensus in the church about what texts were authoritative, but there was no New Testament canon as such. The first canon list was produced by a heretic named Marcion in A.D. 150. This collection comprised some genuine and some fake letters of Paul, and a truncated version of the Gospel according to Luke. Other heretics soon followed suit and produced New Testaments of their own.

The orthodox church responded by producing its own lists of authentic New Testament texts and official repudiations of texts that were considered spurious. The chief criteria for whether or not a book was canonical was apostolic authorship. A text either had to have been written by an apostle or a close associate of the apostles (like Luke). The collective wisdom of the church took a couple of centuries to come to a firm conclusion on which books were true and which were false, but the consensus was remark-



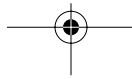
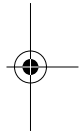
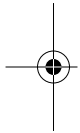


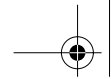
able. The earliest orthodox canon list was the so-called Muratorian canon, dated to A.D. 180. It contained twenty-two of our current twenty-seven books of the New Testament, omitting Hebrews, James, 1-2 Peter and 3 John. It also consciously repudiated the popular Shepherd of Hermas text because it was “written too recently” to be considered Scripture.

Several more canon lists were produced in the next two centuries, agreeing on most of the books in our current New Testament. The four Gospels and the letters of Paul were universally accepted. Unlike some modern scholars, the early church had no problem discerning between authentic Gospel traditions and spurious works like the so-called “Gospel of Thomas.” The books subject to the most dispute were 2 Peter, 2-3 John and Revelation.

There were two developments that necessitated the church’s agreement on a “closed” canon. One was the development of the codex in second century A.D. A codex could only contain so many pages, and there was a tendency for those reading the codex to attribute great authority to its contents. The church councils had to reach an agreement on which books should be bound together.

Another significant event was the persecution initiated by Emperor Diocletian in A.D. 303. Anyone who owned a copy of the New Testament could be executed. It was essential that the church come to a consensus so none of its members would be martyred for anything but the true Word of God. After several more decades of debate on a few disputed books, the New Testament canon was officially closed at the Council of Carthage in A.D. 397.

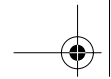




Church came to regard the Vulgate with what can be called superstitious awe, considering the translation itself to be inspired and authoritative. Even after Latin ceased to be a living language, the Vulgate was still used in the Church. By the Middle Ages only scholars could understand the words of the Christian Scriptures.

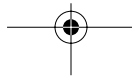
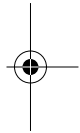
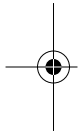
By the fifteenth century, however, many reformers felt it was time for new Bibles in the languages of the people, so they could study the Scriptures for themselves. The first of these modern-language Bibles were simply translations of the Vulgate into English. But eventually, the Protestant scholars began to produce translations that were based not on the Latin translation but on texts in the original biblical languages: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Like Jerome they used the Hebrew Bible of the Jews as the basis for their Old Testament. They also rejected the books of the Septuagint that weren't found in the Jewish Bible. (In part their reasons for rejecting these books were theological. Some books of the Apocrypha had been used to support Catholic doctrines with which the Protestants disagreed.) Martin Luther separated the Greek additions from the other biblical books and placed them under the heading "Apocrypha." While he commended these books as profitable, he cautioned that they weren't to be considered authoritative. In most Protestant circles the apocryphal books eventually came to be regarded as uninspired and unedifying reading. This was how, for most Protestants, the intertestamental period became a time of darkness and silence, as if both God and his people had lost their voices for several centuries.

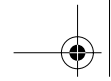
Fortunately, translations of the Apocrypha are now easily available to all Christians, whether Protestant or Catholic. They provide us with a marvelous cross section of the kinds of prose and poetry that were being produced by Second Temple Period Jews. Most of the apocryphal texts aren't all that useful for reconstructing the history of the Jews per se. But two of these books, 1 and 2 Maccabees, have been vitally important to historians. It's not really accurate to call them "first" and "second," because we really don't know for sure which was written first. Nor should we think of them as first and second, like 1-2 Kings in the Old Testament. For while 1-2 Kings record earlier and later events, respectively, 1-2 Maccabees record essentially the same events: those leading up to the Jewish revolt against the Greek king Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 B.C. and the establishment of a new Jewish dynasty. But in spite of the fact that the two works have basically the same story line, they're very different in character. First Macca-



bees was written in Judea, in Aramaic or possibly Hebrew. The original, however, has perished and now exists only in Greek translation. This book was consciously patterned after the Old Testament royal chronicles (1-2 Kings; 1-2 Chronicles). It's clearly designed to demonstrate that the Maccabees (more accurately the "Hasmonaeans," as we will see later) should be regarded as the legitimate monarchs of the Jews. Second Maccabees is an abbreviated edition of a much longer work written by Jason, a Jew living in Cyrene (North Africa). We don't know who edited the text. The original work was written in Greek for Jews living outside Palestine, among the Diaspora communities (Jews living in Gentile lands). It's shorter than 1 Maccabees and covers a smaller span of time. This work is written more along the line of a Greek history, like the work of Herodotus. It has the pace of an adventure story and includes many legendary and gruesome stories that make it a fascinating read. First and Second Maccabees also differ in theological point of view. In 1 Maccabees there seems to be an assumption that our only hope of an "afterlife" is in gaining glory and a good name, so that our descendants will sing our praises. There's little in this book about angels or divine intervention. Its outlook seems similar to the one associated with the Sadducees in the New Testament. In 2 Maccabees, on the other hand, there's a strong emphasis on the resurrection of the dead and eternal rewards. There's also more interest in supernatural phenomenon, like the appearance of angelic beings. The second book of Maccabees tends more toward what would become the Pharisees' theology—and Christians' as well.

The pseudepigrapha and apocalypses. Another large body of important texts from this period is that group we know as the "pseudepigrapha" (singular "pseudepigraphon"). The word *pseudepigrapha* means "false inscriptions." It refers to works issued under a false name, usually of some famous person, often one who's long dead by the time of the writing. Some pseudepigrapha, like the Wisdom of Solomon (written about 100 B.C.), capitalize on the reputation of an ancient saint to present an updated message for the author's time. The book of *Jubilees*, written about 150 B.C., is a very important pseudepigraphon written in the name of Moses. This work retells the stories of Genesis and Exodus, but the author puts a "spin" on the stories that clearly reveals his own biases and concerns. He is especially concerned about ritual purity (i.e., proper washings), mixed marriages between Jews and Gentiles, and fixing the proper dates for various Jewish holidays. This text receives its name from the fact that it





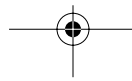
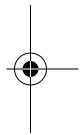
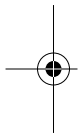
divides history into periods of forty-nine years, the biblical “jubilee.”⁶

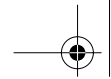
Many pseudepigrapha claim to record prophetic visions of ancient seers—visions that describe the very events occurring at the time when the pseudepigrapha were written. The *Fourth Book of Ezra*, for example, claims to record visions given to Ezra the scribe, who lived over four hundred years before the time of Jesus. But actually the book was quite clearly written during the days of the Roman Empire. The vision “foretells” the rise of Rome, its oppression of the Jews and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem—an event that occurred in A.D. 70. It continues on to predict the imminent coming of the Messiah, who would bring an end to the Roman tyranny.

This pseudepigraphon and many others are what we call “apocalypses” (from the Greek word meaning “to uncover”). When we use the word *apocalypse* in Jewish studies, we’re referring to a category of literary works that share several characteristics. First, most apocalypses are pseudepigraphic. That is, they’re usually written in the name of a famous person from the author’s past. In the apocalypse the hero may travel to heaven or hell to receive a revelation; or he may see a symbolic vision that predicts and explains significant events. An angel usually accompanies the seer to explain the meaning of the scenes or symbols revealed in the vision. In most cases the visions describe events that are actually occurring during the author’s time, and they promise that God will dramatically intervene in world affairs. In the Bible there are two major apocalypses: Daniel 7–12 and the Revelation of John. Outside the Bible there were a great many apocalypses written by both Jews and Christians. It was a very popular genre of literature.

One figure who was the subject of several apocalypses was Enoch, the early descendant of Adam who was so pious that God took him to heaven without requiring him to experience death (Gen 5:24). Many Jewish writers speculated about the wonders that Enoch must have seen on his trip to heaven—and any other trips he might have taken before the final journey. The text called *1 Enoch* is actually a collection of several independent works that have been edited together into a single book. Its sections include (among others) the “Astronomical Book,” written before 200 B.C., recording Enoch’s vision of the heavenly bodies; the “Animal Apocalypse,” c. 165 B.C., which symbolically “predicts” the Jewish revolt against the

⁶See Lev 25:8-17, 29-34, 47-55; 27:22-24.



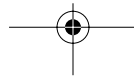
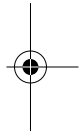
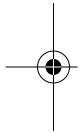


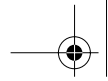
Greeks; and the “Similitudes,” c. 100 B.C., which speaks of the coming of a supernatural Messiah, who will judge all of creation.

One of the troubling aspects of pseudepigraphic literature is that it seems deliberately deceptive. Were the authors of these texts dishonest people, attempting to bamboozle the naive masses with their trickery? But if they were deliberately attempting to deceive, what did they hope to gain by it? No one made any money writing pseudepigrapha, and they certainly didn’t intend to become famous through their efforts. Quite the opposite, in fact: if they had done their work well, no one would ever know they were responsible for these texts. It seems safe to rule out self-interest as the motive for writing works such as these. Could zealotry be a more likely motive? After all, fanatics can often justify less-than-honest methods to further a cause that they consider just. But would scrupulously pious Jews be comfortable using deliberate deception, even in the service of a good cause? It hardly seems likely that they could rail against dishonesty and deceit while they themselves were being willfully dishonest in their method of presentation.

These problems have led some people to suggest that the authors wrote the pseudepigrapha knowing that their readers would recognize them for what they are: pious frauds. But that explanation doesn’t hold water either. When the author of the book of Jude quotes from the *Similitudes of Enoch*, he leaves no doubt that he’s attributing the work to the old patriarch himself (Jude 14-15). Of course, in the two hundred years or so between the composition of the *Similitudes* and the composition of Jude, the Jews may well have forgotten when the text actually appeared. But what about a case like *4 Ezra*? This interesting apocalypse was clearly written sometime around A.D. 90, after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, but it claims to record a revelation given to the fifth-century B.C. scribe Ezra. When the text suddenly appeared in A.D. 90, did the Jews credulously accept it as a long-lost biblical text? We know that *4 Ezra* was widely read and may even have been treated as Scripture by some Jews. Did no one wonder where the text had been hiding for the last five hundred years?

There seems to have been a shared understanding between the authors of these texts and their readers that *some* contemporary writers could speak for long-dead saints. Possibly, pseudepigraphic writing was considered a form of prophecy—inspired communication that proclaimed a God-given message. Perhaps the audience believed that its modern author was completely subsumed in the ancient character whose name he appro-





SOME IMPORTANT JEWISH PSEUDEPIGRAPHA OF THE SECOND TEMPLE PERIOD

1 Enoch

A composite work whose various sections date from the third century B.C. to at least the first century A.D. It purports to record revelations given to Enoch, the Old Testament figure who was “translated” to heaven (Gen 5:21-25). Sections include “The Book of Watchers,” expanding on the story of the fallen angels from Genesis 6; the “Book of Similitudes,” where Enoch sees a vision of the heavenly Son of Man; the “Animal Apocalypse,” a symbolic account of the Maccabean Revolt and the coming kingdom of God; the “Astronomical Book,” a collection of astronomical observations; and the “Apocalypse of Weeks,” an account of biblical history. The best manuscript of the text is preserved in Ethiopic, a Semitic language still used by Ethiopian Christians.

Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs

A collection of texts purporting to be the last wills or “testaments” of the patriarchs to their sons. As it now exists the Testament is a Christian work, but portions of the work may have been composed in the Second Temple Period by Jewish authors. A fragmentary *Testament of Levi* was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls (4Q213) that apparently underlies our existing Greek version. A fragmentary *Testament of Naphtali* also was found among the Scrolls, but its relationship with the Greek version is unclear.

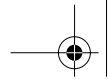
Jubilees

A text purporting to be an account of biblical history told to Moses on Mt. Sinai. It essentially retells the biblical narrative of Genesis and Exodus, dividing the history in periods of forty-nine-year “jubilees.” The text emphasizes purity laws and separation from non-Jews. It was probably composed before the Hasmonean Revolt, early in the second century B.C. Fragments of the original Hebrew text have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, but the only complete manuscripts are in Ethiopic translation.

Letter of Aristeas

An important Jewish text composed in Greek, purporting to be the letter





of an Alexandrian Jew named Aristeas to his brother Philocrates recounting the translation of the Jewish Scriptures (actually, just the books of Moses) into Greek. The account is certainly legendary, but details of Jewish life and the priesthood recorded here are very enlightening. The text probably originated between 150-100 B.C.

Sybilline Oracles

Sybilline prophecies were widely known and very popular in ancient Mediterranean society. Supposedly, these were oracles uttered by women of great antiquity, undying prophetesses who predicted future events. In Jewish tradition the Sybil was identified as a daughter-in-law of Noah. The twelve books of *Sybilline Oracles* were preserved as a Christian collection, but some of the texts were undoubtedly Jewish compositions (later retouched by Christian editors). They date from various times, the earliest being composed probably in the second century B.C.

Psalms of Solomon

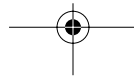
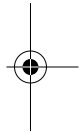
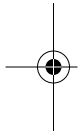
These eighteen texts were composed in the name of Solomon, but they probably date to the first century B.C. Their main theme is Judea's subjugation to Rome and God's imminent deliverance of his people through his Messiah. The texts were originally composed in Hebrew and later translated into Greek.

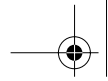
Testament of Moses

A text that purports to be Moses' final words to Joshua. It retells biblical history and extends into the Second Temple Period. Its current form comes from the first century A.D., but it may have originally been composed in an earlier period and supplemented with later additions. An important section of the text speaks of a certain "Taxo," whose voluntary martyrdom may have been expected to usher in God's kingdom.

2 Baruch

Also called the *Apocalypse of Baruch*. This text is written in the name of Jeremiah's secretary Baruch. It contains prayers, hymns, didactic (teaching) passages and visions of the future. It was probably written in the first quarter of the second century A.D. in Palestine, and it reflects on the destruction of the second temple.



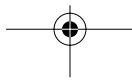
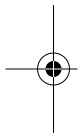
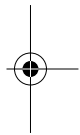


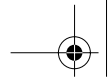
riated. So even though a text might have been created by an unknown first-century A.D. Jewish sage, his creation might have been considered the actual words of Moses or Daniel or Ezra. The author intended no fraud, and the audience—as a general rule—made no such charge.

The pseudepigrapha, though, weren't automatically accepted as legitimate. Like prophecies and other religious works, they had to prove their worth. Some of these texts, like *Jubilees* and *1 Enoch*, were widely accepted as legitimate expressions of the voice of God, but not so authoritative as to be included in the Bible when the sages set the contents of the canon. Others seem to have enjoyed a good deal of popularity in a restricted circle. Some of the Dead Sea Scrolls, for example, fall into this category. They circulated in numerous copies, but never seem to have been read by anyone but the members of the sect that produced them. Still other pseudepigrapha were probably rejected right from the beginning as frauds.

The pseudepigrapha are exceptionally important texts for a couple of reasons. First, they can tell us a good deal about events taking place at the time they were written. The ancient saints in whose names the texts are written sometimes speak in detail about the political circumstances of the time when the texts were actually written. The "Animal Apocalypse" of *1 Enoch*, for instance, gives us a detailed allegorical account of the Maccabean Revolt (167 B.C.); *4 Ezra* (A.D. 90) writes symbolically about the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Furthermore, these texts provide us with important information about the development of Jewish religious thought. The book of *Jubilees* (c. 200-175 B.C.), which claims to be a revelation given to Moses, tells us a good deal about the beliefs of the strictly observant Jew who wrote this text. The fact that the text circulated widely demonstrates that many other Jews resonated with its author's opinions. Some of the Dead Sea Scrolls base their teachings on this very text. Since many of the pseudepigrapha can be dated pretty precisely (because of the historical events they mention), we can use them to fill out our understanding of when and how various ideas came into Judaism. Ideas about the Messiah or the resurrection of the dead are just two important notions that figure prominently in a number of the pseudepigrapha.

The Dead Sea Scrolls. Since I've already mentioned the Dead Sea Scrolls several times, a brief explanation of these texts is in order. An Arab shepherd discovered the first of the Dead Sea Scrolls in a cave near the Dead Sea in 1947. Subsequently, many other texts were discovered in other caves



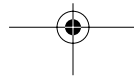
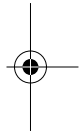
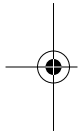


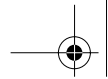
in the region. A few of the scrolls were very well preserved, but most were broken into small pieces, with much of their content lost through the ages. About 30,000 fragments of scrolls were discovered, which fully assembled would yield 800 or 900 different texts. Initial suggestions that the texts were copied or composed in the centuries just before and after Jesus' day have been confirmed by carbon-14 dating. In fact, the earliest of the scrolls may have been written around 200 B.C., while the latest probably come from the second half of the first century A.D.

About one third of the texts are ancient copies of books of the Bible. Fragments of every Old Testament book but Esther have been found by the Dead Sea. Some researchers have argued that a tiny fragment written in Greek is a portion of the Gospel of Mark, but the identification is very dubious. (No other New Testament manuscripts were found among the Scrolls.) The biblical scrolls from the Dead Sea are the oldest Old Testament manuscripts in existence. They're fully a thousand years older than any previously known biblical manuscripts. These texts help us understand the "textual history" of the Bible (i.e., how certain biblical books circulated in different versions), and they give us important insights into the formation of the biblical canon.

The remaining two-thirds are nonbiblical texts, the vast majority of which are religious compositions. Some of these texts were previously known, but they existed only in translations from the Middle Ages: copies of the book of *Jubilees*, older sections of the book of *Enoch* and sections of the Wisdom of Ben Sirach, all in their original languages, have been found in the caves by the Dead Sea. Many others are religious compositions that were never before known, including texts that originate with a group that called itself the *Yahad*, or "Community." It's probably safe to assume that members of this Community (or its descendants) were responsible for writing or copying many of the Scrolls; they may have acquired others that were incorporated into their library. The Community members were probably involved in hiding the collection in the caves around Qumran, as well.

One of the first Dead Sea Scrolls discovered (1JQS) was a rule for ordering the Community, describing requirements for entrance, rules for purity, conduct at meals and so forth. One of its early investigators called this text the *Manual of Discipline* because it reminded him of the Methodist *Manual of Discipline*. A similar text, the *Damascus Document*, includes both rules for conduct—sometimes differing substantially from those of the *Community Rule*—and some cryptic history behind the group's formation.





THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

There are between eight and nine hundred different texts represented among the thirty thousand fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Scholars identify the Scrolls with codes that indicate the cave in which they were discovered and the reference number assigned to the manuscript by its investigators. So 11Q13 indicates that the manuscript was found in Qumran ("Q") Cave 11, and it was assigned the number 13. Many texts have been assigned names as well. 11Q13 is also known as 11Q Melchizedek (11QMelch), since its main theme is the ministry of the priest-king Melchizedek (see chap. ten). Several manuscript fragments, identified by the numbers 4Q394-399, are known collectively as 4QMMT, or 4Q*Miqsat Ma'aseh Torah*, "Some of the Deeds of the Law." In this case a single text exists in several fragmentary manuscripts.

The following categories are somewhat arbitrary because it's not always possible to distinguish between different kinds of texts. The examples following in parentheses are representative, not exhaustive. This list is primarily meant to illustrate the variety of materials found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, not to list all their contents.

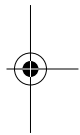
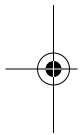
Biblical Texts: At least one fragmentary copy of every book of the Old Testament, except Esther

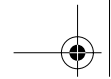
Books from the Apocrypha: Portions of Ben Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) in Hebrew; portions of Tobit in Aramaic

Previously Known Pseudepigrapha: Portions of *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees*

Sectarian "Rules": Texts for ordering the life of the Community. For example, several copies of the *Community Rule*, or *Manual of Discipline* (1QS, for *serekh*, "order"); the *Damascus Document* (CD [a manuscript of this text was first discovered in "C"airo, Egypt, and later among the Dead Sea Scrolls]; 4QDam); the *War Scroll* (1QM, for *milchamah*, "war")

Liturgical Texts: Texts used in worship. For example, hymn collections (1Q "Psalms"; 4Q and 11Q *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*);





blessings and prayers (1QSb; 4Q503); liturgies for various services (4Q409; 4Q414); calendrical texts (describing when various rituals would be performed, or when different groups of priests would serve in the temple; 4Q327-4Q330; 4Q334)

Legal Texts: For example, texts concerning laws of purity and conduct (4QHalakhah-A; 4QMMT; 4Q228); commentaries on biblical laws (4Q251); records of discipline for Community members who violated the rules (4Q477)

Biblical Commentaries: Including both verse-by-verse commentaries and “Rewritten Bible,” or biblical stories retold and expanded. These include 1Q *Genesis Apocryphon*, recounting and expanding on some events from the book of Genesis; 4Q *Prayer of Nabonidus*, a prayer of the penitent king; 11Q *Temple Scroll*, which gives descriptions and regulations of an ideal temple; testaments and soliloquies of Old Testament figures (*Testament of Levi*; *Words of Naphtali*); commentaries on biblical prophecies (the *pesharim*; e.g., the *Habakkuk Peshar* [1QpHab]; the Melchizedek scroll [11QMelch])

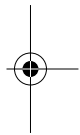
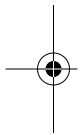
Apocalyptic and Messianic Texts: Eschatological (i.e., “end of the world”) visions often attributed to various ancient seers. E.g., 4Q243, a pseudo-Daniel text; 4Q246, which speaks of a figure who’ll be called “the son of God”; 4Q552-3, which includes a vision of four world kingdoms similar to those of Daniel 2 and 7

Wisdom texts: Collections of proverbs and insights. For example, *Songs of the Sage* (4Q510); lists of proverbial admonitions (4Q416, 418)

Court Tales: Tales set in the court of a foreign king (e.g., the tale of Bagasraw [4Q550])

“Magic” Texts: Physiognomies, which relate people’s physical features to their character (4Q186); brontologia, which interpret the significance of celestial phenomena (4Q318); exorcism rituals (4Q560)

Miscellaneous Documents: The *Copper Scroll* (3Q15), a record inscribed on copper that tells where various treasuries have been buried; a few deeds, bills of sale, etc. (4Q342-358)



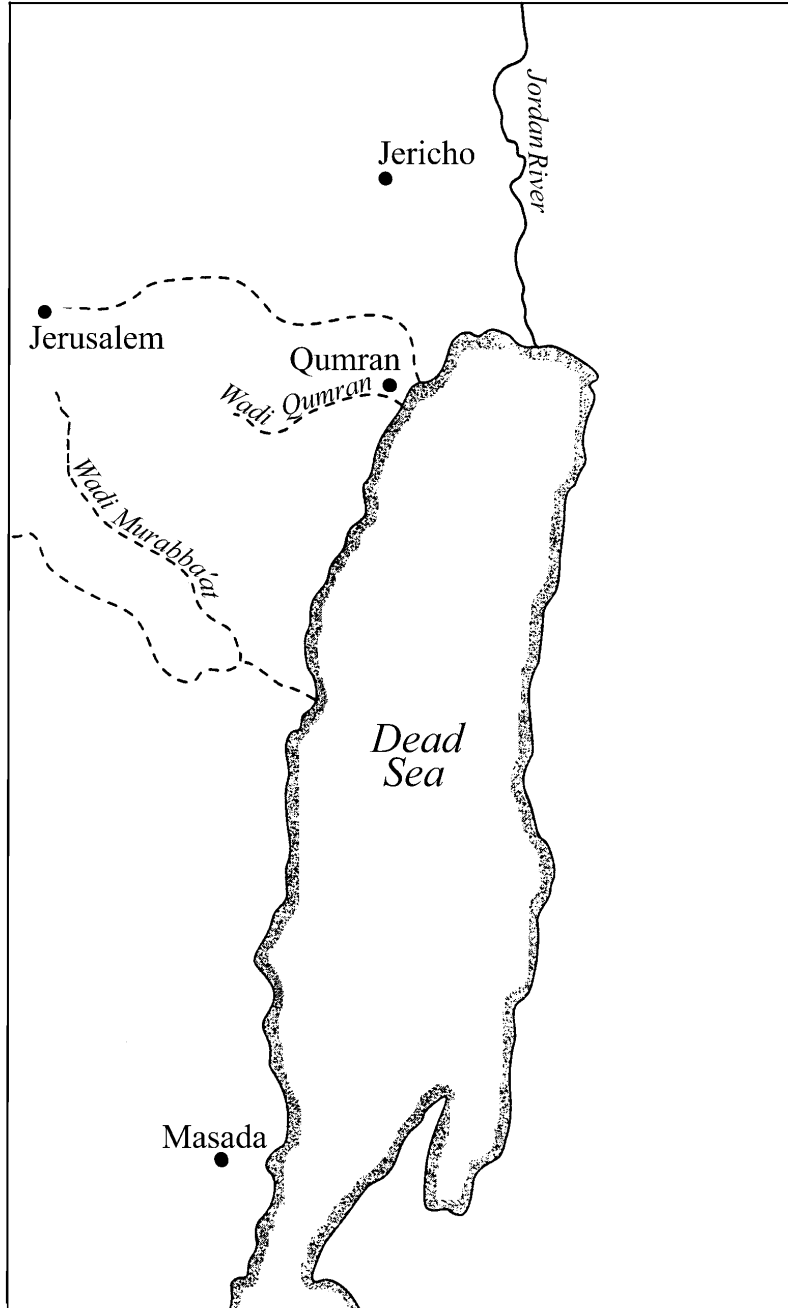
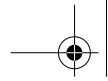
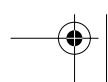
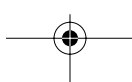
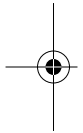
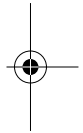
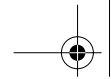


Figure 1. Location of Qumran

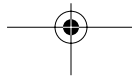
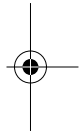
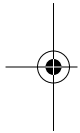


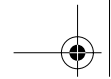


It tells how an evil priest persecuted the group's leader, the Teacher of Righteousness. The group was forced to flee to Damascus and set up its community there. Another text, *Miqsat Ma'aseh Hattorah* ("Some of the Matters of the Law," abbreviated 4QMMT) is written in the form of a letter to a Judean authority, outlining the Community's specific grievances against the religious establishment in Jerusalem. (We'll discuss some of these grievances in a later chapter.) An interesting text called the *War Scroll* foretells an imminent battle with Rome. It includes prophecies, instructions, hymns and prayers, all assuring the "righteous" Jews of their total victory over the "forces of darkness." Other texts include commentaries on biblical laws, retellings of biblical stories, poetry books, apocalypses and pseudepigrapha. It's not always possible to determine which of these texts were composed by Community members and which were not.

A group of very enlightening texts includes commentaries on prophetic books of the Bible. Scholars call these texts *pesharim* (Hebrew for "interpretations"), a word that figures prominently in these manuscripts. The *pesharim* interpret the ancient biblical prophecies as predictions of specific events occurring in the interpreter's time. The typical form begins with a biblical quotation, as in this example from the *Habakkuk Peshar*: "For see, I am raising up the Chaldeans [Babylonians], a bitter, hasty people" (Hab 1:6). The author interprets the verse in this manner: "Its interpretation (*peshar*) is this: it refers to the Kittim [Romans], who are swift and mighty in battle, destroying multitudes. . . ." The commentator applied Habakkuk's prophecy about the Babylonians to the enemies that existed in his own day. Such commentaries exist for portions of Isaiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Psalms (which both the Community members and the New Testament treat as prophecy) and even scattered references from Numbers, Deuteronomy and other books. The theological assumption behind this method—that prophecies aren't bound to a specific historical context but can have multiple fulfillments—seems to underlie some New Testament biblical interpretation as well. Often in the Gospels, Old Testament prophecies that already had been fulfilled in antiquity are reinterpreted as having a greater fulfillment in the ministry of Jesus Christ.⁷

⁷For example, Mt 1:22-23, where Isaiah's prophecy about a miraculous birth that will signal the downfall of Samaria and Damascus (Is 7:1-16) is reinterpreted as a prediction of the virgin birth. So too Mt 2:15, where Hos 11:1, "Out of Egypt I called my son," is interpreted as a prediction of Mary and Joseph's flight to Egypt. The prophecy originally spoke of the Exodus. See further the text box on "Interpreting Prophecy" in chapter two.

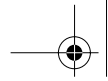




The nonbiblical Scrolls give us some cryptic references to historical events, but their value for reconstructing Jewish history is rather small. Their greatest benefit to us is what they tell us about Jewish religious beliefs around the time of Jesus. From the Scrolls we learn that the religious scenery in early Judaism was more complicated than we had imagined. Power struggles, separatism, asceticism and militancy are all revealed among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Flavius Josephus. All the texts that we've discussed so far form parts of a historical mosaic. They give us significant glimpses into the development of Jewish culture and religious thought during the time between the Testaments. But by far the most important source of information for the latter part of this era is the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus. Josephus was born about A.D. 37, and did his historical writing around the end of the first century and the beginning of the second. His work was comprehensive, surveying the history of his people from Abraham through to his own day. For the Old Testament period, it appears that his sole source of information was the Old Testament itself—interpreted at times with his own “unique” perspective. But for the intertestamental period, he obviously had access to sources that no longer exist today. Some of his reports are clearly legendary; some a mix of legend and history; but most—bearing in mind their author's purpose—seem to be largely reliable. For the New Testament era, his detailed reports on Jewish politics and religion are unparalleled in value.

Josephus was himself one of the true characters of history. We know a good deal about him because one of Josephus's favorite subjects was Josephus himself. He wrote an autobiography called *The Life of Flavius Josephus* (or the *Vita*, referenced in the notes as *Life*) and also detailed many of his activities in his account of the Jewish revolt against Rome (titled *The War of the Jews*, or *Bellum*, referenced in the notes as *War*). In these sources we're told that Josephus was a child prodigy who (like Jesus) dazzled the teachers of the law with his brilliance. As a young man he investigated several different Jewish sects, but he eventually aligned himself with the Pharisees. He became involved in the Jewish revolt against Rome in A.D. 67 and claims to have been the general of the Jewish militia in Galilee, north of Judea. It would have been a tremendous responsibility for a young man: Galilee was the Jews' first line of defense against the Roman army. And if you take Josephus's account seriously, it sounds like he discharged his responsibility admirably, considering the underequipped and poorly

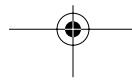
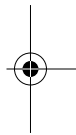
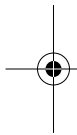


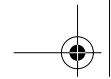
trained troops that he had to work with. In fact, the way Josephus tells the story, it appears that he would have made a noble stand if not for the duplicity and incompetence of those around him. But Josephus wants us to know that in spite of his impressive military maneuvers it was never actually his expectation to defeat Rome. Rather, he recognized that revolt was hopeless, and he fought only to spare his country from utter destruction at the hands of the vastly superior Roman forces. He presents his position as an ambivalent one, torn between the desire to keep the peace and the desire to discharge his duties to the best of his ability.

Josephus tells us in detail about how he recruited and trained the Galilean militia. He seems to have been proud of his troops. But unfortunately at the first encounter with the Romans, his army scattered. Josephus led his remaining soldiers to the city of Jotapata, which they fortified to withstand a lengthy Roman siege.⁸ But when the city fell before General Vespasian's army, Josephus and forty of his soldiers slipped away and hid in a nearby cave. Realizing the hopelessness of their situation, they formed a suicide pact. Josephus reports that he strongly opposed the idea of suicide, but his comrades were determined to die. Josephus persuaded them, however, that it was better to die by the hand of another than to die by their own hands. So the soldiers drew lots, intending that the person who drew number one would be killed by number two, number two then killed by number three, until the last would kill himself. And as "fate" would have it, Josephus drew the final position.

The Jewish soldiers began to dispatch each other in order. One after another they fell. Finally, only Josephus and one other remained. Now Josephus saw his chance. He persuaded his partner that a Jew shouldn't stain his hands with the blood of a fellow Jew and that their deaths would accomplish nothing. Instead, they should surrender to Vespasian and attempt to help their people by bringing a quick end to the war. The partner agreed. So Josephus presented himself to the Roman general. We have no idea what happened to the partner—he simply disappears from the scene. But Josephus intimated to the general that he himself was no ordinary captive. Not only did he have great insights into the motives and tactics of the Jewish rebels, he also had the power to tell the future! Josephus informed Vespasian that God revealed to him that the Roman general would one

⁸The story of the Jotapata affair is found in *War* 3.7.1—8.9 (340-408). See the "Further Reading" section for an explanation of the reference numbers.

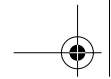




day become the emperor. At the time it would have seemed an unlikely development. Vespasian wasn't related to Emperor Nero, and he was far from Rome, fighting in an obscure province against a troublesome but unimportant people. Nonetheless Vespasian agreed to put Josephus to the test. If he did indeed become emperor, Josephus would receive a pardon and the favor of the emperor. If he didn't, Josephus would be executed.

As the war progressed, Josephus aided the Romans in their efforts to put down the rebellion. He tells us of his pain as he stood outside the walls of Jerusalem and pleaded with his fellow Jews to give up their mad resistance. And then in A.D. 69 Emperor Nero died, leaving no heir. In the struggle that ensued one candidate was put forth as emperor and then assassinated; then another was installed, and the same fate befell him. Finally, Vespasian's legions took it upon themselves to install their general as emperor. Josephus was vindicated, and when the Jewish Revolt was done, he returned with Vespasian's army to Rome. There, living in luxury on a government pension, he began his writing career. He published numerous works, several of which have survived to our own day. In addition to his autobiography and an account of the Great Revolt, which were mentioned above, he also published *The Antiquities of the Jews* (*Antiquitates Judaicae*, referenced in the notes as *Ant.*), recounting the history of Judaism from Abraham to Josephus's day, and an apologetic work, *Against Apion* (*Contra Apionem*), defending Judaism from its detractors.

Throughout history Christians have found much value in Josephus's writings. His works were copied and studied by Christian scholars, occasionally being retouched by them to make Josephus sound more well-disposed toward Christianity than he actually was. Jews, understandably enough, considered Josephus a traitor, and until the last century or so paid little attention to his writings. Now, however, we all acknowledge the great debt history owes to this self-styled prophet and collaborator. Are his writings completely reliable? Of course not. As noted earlier his history of Old Testament Israel comes almost exclusively from the Old Testament itself, distorted at times to serve his own purposes. For example, Josephus retells the stories from the era after Judah was conquered by Babylon in ways that make the Jews seem like the ideal subjects of foreign monarchs—just what he'd have the Romans believe about his people. There's no doubt too that Josephus's accounts of the Jewish revolt are designed to place the blame for the war on low-bred hotheads, while he casts himself and other members of the Jewish elite in the best possible light. Some sto-



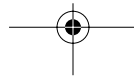
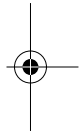
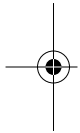
ries, most scholars would agree, are outright fiction. The whole episode of the suicide pact at Jotapata seems especially suspect.

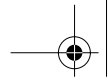
On the other hand, Josephus's historiography shouldn't be judged too harshly. He didn't write solely to vindicate himself or to portray himself as a great hero. He also had some more noble motives. He wanted to make the Jewish people known to the world. He wanted to demonstrate to the nations that Israel had a long and proud history—an important consideration, seeing that the dominant worldview of Josephus's day considered "old" and "good" to be almost synonymous. And most of all he wrote to soften the hearts of the Gentiles so that Roman retribution wouldn't be too terrible. His writings are both history and propaganda, to be sure. But when read with a critical eye, their historical value far outweighs that of any other surviving sources.

Philo Judeus and other sources. Another important writer from this era is Philo of Alexandria, or Philo Judeus. Philo was probably born sometime around 20 B.C., and he lived until sometime after A.D. 40. He was an aristocratic Jew from the cosmopolitan Egyptian city of Alexandria. This jewel of the ancient world was a center of learning and trade, and a variety of ethnic groups made their homes there—including a large number of Jews. Philo, like other members of his family, was a well-known statesman who held positions of considerable authority. However, Philo's importance to us doesn't derive from his political accomplishments but his literary work. He wrote volumes on philosophy, biblical interpretation, and history, many of which have survived to this day.

Philo's philosophy merged Jewish ideas with gleanings from several Greek philosophers. Aspects of Neo-Platonism, Stoicism and other systems illuminated his thinking. Christians found great value in his theories about the *logos*, or Word of God, as a person separate from God but equally divine. It seemed that he anticipated the sentiments expressed by John at the beginning of his Gospel. Some early church fathers (especially Origen) adopted Philo's method of interpreting Old Testament stories as allegories, seeing each character or event as a symbol of a deep theological truth. But most important for our purposes are his descriptions of Jewish customs, beliefs and groups that existed in his day. He also wrote accounts of some important political events of the first century A.D. that affected Jewish life in both Egypt and Palestine.

There were other ancient historians who showed some interest in the Jews. The Greek historians Herodotus (born about 480 B.C.) and Thucy-





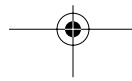
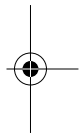
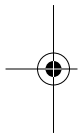
RABBINIC LITERATURE

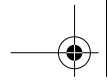
The phrase “rabbinic literature” is used rather loosely to designate texts produced by Jewish rabbis from about the second through the twelfth centuries A.D. Some of the most important of these texts include:

Mishnah (“second [law]?”)—A collection of rabbinic legal discussions and other traditions dating from about the first two centuries A.D. It is divided into six orders, or major sections: “Seeds,” “Appointed Times,” “Women,” “Damages,” “Holy Things” and “Purifications.” These orders are subdivided into sixty-three tractates covering areas of law under the general headings (e.g., the tractate “Sabbath” is found in the order “Appointed Times”). Tradition holds that Rabbi Judah the Prince compiled the text early in the third century from the discussions of the Tannaim, rabbinic scholars of the first two centuries A.D. The Mishnah is written in a late form of Hebrew. Orthodox Jews consider the Mishnah to be an authoritative document, second to the Scriptures. In references the Mishnah is designated “M.,” followed by the tractate name, then chapter and verse reference number, e.g., *M. Sanhedrin 2.3*.

Tosephta (“addition”)—A collection of Tannaitic traditions, mostly halakhic (i.e., legal), not included in the Mishnah. The Jews don’t consider the Tosephta to be authoritative in the same way that the Mishnah is regarded. In this study, references to the Tosephta are designated “T.,” followed by the tractate and reference number.

Talmud (“teaching”)—An expansion of the Mishnah. It includes the Mishnah and an extensive Aramaic (or sometimes Hebrew)

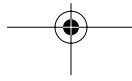
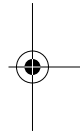
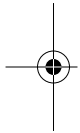


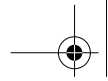


commentary called the *gemara* (“tradition”), written by later rabbis. The *gemara* sometimes delves further into legal issues, but more often it offers a homiletical or devotional commentary. Two editions of the Talmud were produced. One, called the “Jerusalem Talmud,” was composed in Palestine, probably in the fifth century A.D. The other was written in Babylon, probably in the sixth century A.D. Both are divided into orders and tractates, following those of the Mishnah. Jewish tradition regards the Babylonian Talmud to be more authoritative. The Babylonian Talmud is referenced here as *B. Tal.*, and the Palestinian as *Y. Tal.* (for “Yerushalmi,” meaning “of Jerusalem”), followed by standard reference numbers.

Midrashim (singular Midrash, “exposition”)—Rabbinic biblical commentaries. Some midrashim contain comments from a variety of authors, while others are attributed to a single rabbi. Some of these texts emphasize legal matters (called *halakhah* by the rabbis), while others are more devotional (called *haggadah*). The earliest of the midrashim may have been written before the end of the second century A.D., and they were produced well into the Middle Ages. Midrashim are cited by their titles and reference numbers in standard editions.

Targumin (singular Targum, “translation”)—An Aramaic translation of the Old Testament. Like the Septuagint, which was produced for use in the Greek synagogues, the targumin were probably produced for use in the Aramaic-speaking communities of Palestine and the Diaspora. Several different Targumin exist. They often incorporate interesting midrashim, or commentaries, into the text. Targumin are cited by name, book, chapter and verse.





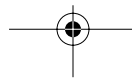
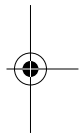
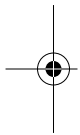
dides (born around 460 B.C.) provide helpful background information for the times in which they lived, but they tell us little about the Jews per se. A later Greek writer, Strabo (born c. 64 B.C.), gives us some information (and a little misinformation) about Jewish life and lands in the decades before the time of Jesus. The Roman historians Tacitus (born about A.D. 56) and Suetonius (born mid-first century A.D.) devote some attention to the Jews, but their testimonies are highly unflattering. These authors are far more important to us for what they say about Roman government in the New Testament era. The Christian historian Eusebius, writing in the fourth century A.D., tells us some interesting tidbits concerning Jewish history and culture in the days after Christ. He also preserves some fragmentary testimonies about the Jews from classical authors.

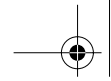
Jewish rabbinic literature, written in the first few centuries of the time after Christ, also records traditions (some more reliable than others) about Jewish beliefs and culture in intertestamental times. The Mishnah (abbreviated *M.*), Tosephta (abbreviated *T.*), the Babylonian Talmud (*B. Tal.*), and the Palestinian Talmud (or *Talmud Yerushalmi*, *Y. Tal.*) are the most significant Jewish texts of this era. One first-century A.D. Jewish text, the “Scroll of Fasting” (*Megillat Ta’anith*), has proven useful to historians. It’s a list of days when it was forbidden to fast because those days were anniversaries of some joyous occasion. It helps us to fix the chronology of some major occurrences in Jewish history.

Telling the Story

The history of Second Temple Judaism must be recounted in terms of events and ideas. It’s the events that form the framework of history, and the ideas that comprise its substance. Events often inspire ideas, and ideas can lead to great deeds. So in the chapters that follow you’ll read of significant achievements, heroic actions and great ideas. But you’ll also read of tragedies, evil deeds and notions that sometimes seem to fly in the face of both reason and revelation. Be charitable in your judgments—after all, the people of ancient Judah weren’t privileged to the two thousand years of reflection and continued revelations that modern Christians enjoy.

At the end of this book you’ll find a table that summarizes the biblical and postbiblical story from the days of Abraham up to the end of the Second Temple Period. This broad outline will help you to orient yourself as you navigate through the unfamiliar territory of the time between the Testaments.





For Further Reading

Here are some general treatments of intertestamental literature and history, and some useful collections of texts and studies. The introductory surveys are offered here so the reader can compare a variety of perspectives. Some of these works will be noted in the "For Further Reading" sections at the end of each chapter.

Texts

Brenton, Lancelot. *The Septuagint with Apocrypha*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1986. A useful Greek version with English translation, but no critical apparatus.

Charles, R. H. *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913. Textual anthology in English translation.

Charlesworth, James, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 2 vols. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983, 1985. A modern anthology which expands on Charles's classic work.

Danby, Herbert. *The Mishnah*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933. References to the Mishnah are designated "M.," followed by the tractate and reference number.

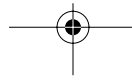
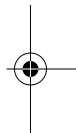
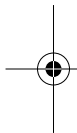
García Martínez, Florentino. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*. 2nd ed. New York: E. J. Brill; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996. Generally regarded as an academic standard.

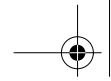
Schiffman, Lawrence H. *Texts and Traditions: A Source Reader for the Study of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism*. Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav, 1998.

Thackeray, H. St. John; R. Marcus; A. Wikgren; and L. H. Feldman. *Josephus*. Loeb Classical Library, 9 vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926-1965. Greek text with English translation. See Whiston below for an explanation of reference numbers.

Vermes, Geza. *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. New York: Penguin, 1997. An inexpensive and generally accurate translation.

Whiston, William, trans. *The Works of Flavius Josephus*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998. Standard popular translation. In this book, I include both the Whiston and Loeb reference numbers in the following format: book number. Whiston chapter number. Whiston paragraph number (Loeb paragraph number). So *Antiquities*, book 2, chapter 4, paragraph 1, is cited thus: *Ant.* 2.4.1 (39-40), where "39-40" refers to the Loeb numbering system.





Wise, Michael O., Edward Cook, and Martin G. Abegg Jr., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation*. San Francisco: Harper, 1996. Very readable translation with useful commentary.

General Studies of Intertestamental Judaism

Cohen, Shaye J. D. *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989. Generally topical approach by a respected Jewish scholar.

Grabbe, Lester. *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*. 2 vols. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992. A comprehensive and authoritative treatment.

Hayes, J. H., and J. M. Miller, eds. *Israelite and Judaeae History*. London: SCM Press, 1977. Pertinent chapters cover the Persian period.

Helyer, Larry R. *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period: A Guide for New Testament Students*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002. Good text-based overview of the latter half of the period.

Horbury, William, W. D. Davies, Louis Finkelstein, and John Sturdy. *The Cambridge History of Judaism*. Vols. 1-3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984-1999. Collected essays on various periods and topics.

Kraft, Robert A., and George W. E. Nickelsburg, eds. *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986. Synopses of important studies and overviews of the state of the research in the late 1980s.

Murphy, Frederick J. *Early Judaism: The Exile to the Time of Jesus*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002. Designed as a textbook for college use.

Schürer, Emil. *A History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*. Edited by Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar and Matthew Black. 4 vols. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1973-1987. A scholarly classic recently revised.

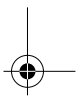
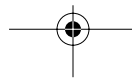
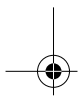
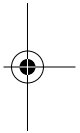
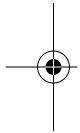
Stone, Michael, ed. *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984. Collection of essays giving overviews of the contents of the ancient texts.

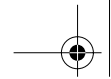
VanderKam, James. *An Introduction to Early Judaism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. Recent study is especially useful for its synopses of Jewish literature.

Apocalyptic and Pseudepigrapha

Collins, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination*. New York: Crossroad, 1984. Excellent introduction by a respected scholar.

Hellholm, D., ed. *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near*





East. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1983. Collection of academic essays covering various regions.

Russell, D. S. *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964. Classic work still frequently cited.

Apocrypha

deSilva, David. *Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context, and Significance*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002. A recent, worthwhile contribution to a difficult field.

Metzger, Bruce. *An Introduction to the Apocrypha*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957. Classic overview of the contents and importance of the Apocrypha.

Biblical History, Historiography and Archaeology

Bright, John. *A History of Israel*. 4th ed. Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1999. A standard text with a moderately critical approach to Old Testament history.

Dever, William G. *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001. Though hardly conservative, Dever argues for a balanced integration of archaeology and biblical studies.

Hoerth, Alfred. *Archaeology and the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998. Conservative work discusses the benefits and limits of archaeology and its relevance for biblical studies.

Merrill, Eugene. *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996. A very conservative overview of biblical history.

